

Monday, March 02, 2015

Testimony for March 3rd, 2015, 5:00PM
for the Appropriations Secondary Education Sub-Committee

To the attention of:

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Secondary Education Sub-Committee,

My name is Katherine Rose and I am writing to you in regards to the Norwich Youth Services Bureau (NYSB) and the bureaus throughout the state. It's hard to pick a place to begin, because I have benefited in countless ways since my first interaction with the bureau. That first interaction was through the Summer Youth Employment Program. I was fortunate enough to be enrolled in the program every summer of my high school career, from the summer of 2006 to the summer of 2010. Not only was this programing allowing me to keep up my motivation and drive throughout the summer break, but it also allowed me to earn income to assist in providing for myself.

I am just one of thousands of teens in Norwich who comes from a household that lands in the lower end of the middle class spectrum. My mother became disabled and was no longer able to work full-time – and soon after unable to work at all – right before I entered high school. Due to my mother's ingenuity and programs like the NYSB, I can thankfully say I never really went without. Not only was I able to get out and do things during the summer, I was able to make money at the same time. The craziest thing about the whole experience was each summer was more fun than the last and now those summers are some of my most cherished memories. The NYSB didn't just put you to work. The overworked, underpaid, and extremely dedicated staff members at the NYSB sit with each youth in the program and help them determine a career path that they are genuinely interested in pursuing. Those same workers then reach out to all of the local business that fit these criteria, and convince them to take on a youth employee for the summer. More or less, the employees of the NYSB work to make teens' dreams come true.

Today's youth are raised, and expected to thrive, in an era of apathy. I remember being told once when I was young that all the ideas in the world had already been thought up – a notion that many in my generation have taken to heart. It's as though the teens of today are well aware that success is unattainable, so why try at all? I remember strongly feeling this way myself, but I was fortunate to have a light at the end of my tunnel. That beacon was the NYSB.

Along with the Summer Youth Employment the NYSB also offered an after school program that further equipped teens with the tools and confidence to be successful in the workforce. We were taught communication skills, presentation, resume building, how to write a proper cover letter and everything else associated – things that, contrary to popular belief, are not

typically part of the in-school curriculum. It's difficult for me to find words that properly convey how important these programs are. Connecticut does not allow funding to the schools in Norwich to run their own career placement programs. The resources that are available are very limited. The NYSB has been the saving grace in transform teens from lackadaisy, parent-reliant students to driven, independent adults. The future is bleak as it is, can you imagine what it would be like without these programs at all?

I am often told that I am extremely motivated, unlike most others my age. It's very flattering, but at the same time disappointing. There is no reason that everyone my age can't hold this same determination for reaching their goals, other than lack of investment from those who are supposed to showing us the way. **Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Secondary Education Sub-Committee: These people are YOU.** You took your jobs for a reason. We are taught in civics class that the reason everyday people take public office is to help others through government. Please, show the youth of Norwich and Connecticut that our faith and belief in you has not been in vain. Please don't single-handedly take away the one chance we have a making a better future for ourselves; a program filled with dedicated people who care.

I owe my determination, drive, will power and hope to Pat Dixe, Kay Eyeberse, Angelo Callus, and the rest of the amazing staff at the NYSB. I can promise you as well, that I am not the only one who feels this way. Another promise is that by cutting these programs, you are cutting the youth's hope.

Sincerely,
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